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SENATOR SAYS NICARAGUAN MINING AVOIDS MILITARY ACTION  
BY JESS BLACKBURN  
HOUSTON

Sen. Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., said Monday the mining of Nicaraguan ports had helped avoid U.S. military intervention in the Central American country.

"Without any involvement of military action, we can take prompt action to ensure the Nicaraguan people have the freedom to choose what form of government they will have.

"Or, we can avoid prompt action and risk military involvement later at a much greater cost and at the possible expense of American lives."

Denton was one of 12 senators to vote last week against prohibiting the use of any funds approved for covert activity in Nicaragua in the mining of ports. The CIA helped mine three ports to act as a blockade against the flow of Soviet arms to Nicaragua.

The majority of the Senate backed criticism of the CIA and the president last week for failing to fully brief the Senate Intelligence Committee of the mining activities.

Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan, D-N.Y., Sunday announced his decision to resign as vice chairman of the committee because of the administration's failure to keep the committee informed.

Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., has also criticized CIA Director William Casey for not keeping the committee advised. Casey has said the Senate and House have both been briefed on the mining.

Denton, in Houston for a fundraiser for Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas, acknowledged there had been failure in following the proper briefing channels, but said that was no reason for pulling the mines out of the ports.

"It should be noted that no ship has been sunk, no one has been killed," he said. "These are not real mines. They are low explosive mines meant for harassment. They have caused some shipping insurance rates to go up at Lloyds of London and they have discouraged the violent exportation of Communism along the Minagua-Soviet axis, which is what we could have hoped would happen."

Denton, a prisoner of war in Vietnam for eight years, said as a Naval officer he helped plan mining operations for Vietnam ports in 1965 that were never carried out.

"Had they been, I think that war would have been quickly concluded. Instead, it drug on at great expense to American lives. I don't want to see that happen again," he said.

He attacked Congress for failures in foreign policy.

"The media blames the president but it is the Congress that is to blame for this country's failures in developing consistent foreign policy," he said.

"It should be left to the President and chief advisers to decide policy based on the common defense of the country and for Congress to advise and consent. Instead, Congress has made its role one of devise and dissent."